

Southwest Resource Advisory Council
MEETING MINUTES
Friday, November 16, 2007
Devil's Thumb Gold Club
9900 Devil's Thumb Road
Delta, Colorado

ATTENDEES

Resource Advisory Council Members

Jevin Croteau, Category 1	Betsy Marston, Category 2
Bill Ela, Category 3	Dan Morse, Category 2
Kenneth Emory, Category 1	Alan Staehle, Category 3
Andrew Gulliford, Category 2	Kathy Welt, Category 1
Al Heaton, Category 1	Kelly Wilson, Category 3
Nik Kendziorski, Category 2	Jim Young, Category 1

Not present: Andrea Robinsong, Category 2; Jim Cochran, Category 3; Gerald Koppenhafer, Category 3;

BLM and visiting FS Staff

Steve Beverlin		Linda Nelson
Bob Hartman		Teresa Pfifer
Lynn Lewis		Barb Sharrow
Mel Lloyd		Ryan Taylor
Kenny McDaniel		W.R. Young
Visitors	Representing	Town/City
Tim Carlson (presenter)	Tamarisk Coalition	Grand Junction
Mike Eberhard (presenter)	Halliburton	Denver
Estella Holmes	Self	Eckert
Lorie Molitor	WSERC	Cedaredge
Hank Lohmeyer	Delta County Independent	Delta
Christina	Telluride Watch	Telluride
Lisa	Montrose Daily Press	Montrose
Trudy Kareus	Senator Salazar	Grand Junction
Matthew McCombs	Senator Salazar	Grand Junction
Cindy Emmons	Norwest Corp.	Grand Junction
Andy Treharne	Senator Allard	Grand Junction
Christina Callicott	Telluride Watch	Ridgway
Peter Ortego	Ute Mountain Ute Tribe	Towaoc
Chad Kennard	Colorado Env. Coalition	Grand Junction
Shauna Murphy	Halliburton	Grand Junction
Richard Hartley	Halliburton	Grand Junction

Opening Remarks/Designated Federal Officer and RAC Chair Time

Chair Kathy Welt called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. There was a round of introductions. Today's attendance constitutes a quorum.

New RAC Appointments, Introductions and Orientation

Barb Sharrow, Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the Southwest Resource Advisory Council (RAC), provided an orientation on BLM and its RACs, a product of the Federal Land Policy & Management Act, for new RAC members Jevin Croteau (energy), Jim Young (grazing) and Judge Bill Ela (public-at-large). Reappointments are Andrea Robinsong (environmental) and Alan Staehle (public-at-large).

Field Managers Update

Gunnison Field Office (GFO): Kenny McDaniel updated the RAC on the Travel Management Plan being developed jointly with the U.S. Forest Service. The team is reviewing public comment, and the Draft EIS is expected in late spring 2008. LKA Mining presented a proposal for gold mining near Lake City, which BLM denied, and it has resulted in a lawsuit. The IBLA has asked LKA and the BLM to reach an agreement. The collection of shed antlers is impacting Gunnison sage grouse (GuSG) habitat, particularly during the mating season, and in an effort to mitigate that, the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee has asked Colorado Division of Wildlife to restrict antler shed hunting within the Gunnison Basin during this critical time. Language will be presented to the Wildlife Commission at their January meeting. Progress is being made on hiring a range specialist; however, the wildlife biologist is now leaving. The RAC will propose an update to their 2006 Resolution (see June 2006 meeting minutes).

San Juan Public Lands Center (SJPLC): Steve Beverlin reported on behalf of Mark Stiles today and explained the Service First (BLM/U.S. Forest Service (FS)) structure. There will be a significant number of retirements in the next year. Other issues within the Center include travel management, energy development, diseased aspen stands, and declining budgets. The joint BLM/FS draft planning document is due out in December. The Canyons of the Ancients National Monument (CANM) draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) was recently issued and is available for public review.

Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO): The UFO is also facing several retirements in the next few months, and vacancies are filled as quickly as possible. The UFO Travel Management Plan is proceeding, and the BLM will be developing the preferred alternative travel network system for the Dry Creek area this winter after public comments are gathered. UFO is proposing to designate routes and trails in the Dry Creek area, as well as from cross-country to limited-to-existing for the remainder of travel not already designated. The UFO will initiate pre-plan activities in 2008 for the RMP revision. The FS final EIS on the proposed Bull Mountain pipeline has been issued. Uranium claims and mining plans continue to come in. Ted Moe was recently hired as the Gunnison Gorge NCA law enforcement officer. County commissioners from Mesa, Delta, and Montrose counties have verbally given a conditional recommendation to U.S. Senators Salazar and Allard to move forward with the next steps in proposing legislation for the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (NCA), which would include the Dominguez Wilderness Study Area. The Boards of County Commissioners are aiming to provide a written recommendation to the Senators by the end of the year.

BLM National Information: The Department of Energy Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on proposed nationwide energy corridors is being issued today. A public meeting is scheduled for January 15 in Grand Junction.

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument Subgroup

Beverlin, on behalf of Manager LouAnn Jacobson, requested that the RAC discuss and vote on placing Peter Ortego as an alternate tribal representative to Carl Knight on the CANM Advisory Committee. Kelly Wilson, chairman of the sub-committee, made a motion to that effect and Al Heaton seconded. There was unanimous vote, with none opposed, for Ortego to join the Committee as motioned. Wilson provided a brief update on the draft RMP and the major public issues concerning it. Concerns include carbon dioxide well drilling and maintenance, and public access to lands. Concerns were raised today regarding damage to cultural sites from storm water run-off, and the sub-committee is addressing this.

Hydraulic Fracturing 101, Halliburton

Mike Eberhard, a technical engineer with Halliburton Energy Services for 26 years, provided an informational presentation to the RAC on hydraulic fracturing. Eberhard discussed the geology of the Rockies, the focus of today's presentation, and how that plays a role in extracting different natural gas resources. Technology now allows industry to economically drill for gas with minimal impacts to the surface. Hydraulic fracturing is defined as "causing rock to fail in tension when enough hydraulic pressure is applied to overcome the formation's minimum *in situ* stress." Wells are fraced in order to improve gas production from the wells—some wells require the process to initiate gas production. Fluids and proppants (typically sand) are used in fracing, with water fracs being the most common type of frac. Polymers, crosslinkers, pH control, gel breakers, surfactants, biocides, and fluid loss additives are some of the chemical product types used. More environmentally responsible chemicals are being used today than were used 15 or more years ago, and all are similar in chemical composition to common household chemicals found in everyday life, such as Tilex, Windex, or Borax. Most mixtures are measured in one-half or one gallon of additive to 1,000 gallons of water when pumped into the well bore deep below the ground and typically separated from near surface fresh water aquifers by several thousand feet of solid rock. Monitoring is an important part of the process. Fracing fluid *mixtures* (i.e. the "recipes") are considered proprietary, just like patented products of the corporate world, to protect against competition, but all hazardous ingredients are listed by the manufacturers on product Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) along with other required information. Gas production in the Rockies is climbing while production nationally is declining. Eberhard fielded a number of questions.

Tamarisk Coalition: Working to Restore Riparian Lands

Tim Carlson, executive director of the Tamarisk Coalition, gave a primer on what tamarisk, or salt cedar, is and what the coalition does. A non-profit, the organization was formed out of several interested parties who strive to provide resources and technical support to restore riparian lands to healthy conditions. Tamarisk can change stream morphology and choke out native vegetation by depositing salt on soils. One of the biggest issues is the plant's large consumption of water with roots going down 100 feet. Populations of tamarisk have been mapped and a plan developed for moving forward to reduce Colorado populations in the Colorado, Gunnison, Dolores and Uncompahgre watersheds. The Coalition works with Colorado State University to

conduct research. There are a number of techniques used to kill tamarisk, including biological control using the tamarisk leaf beetle. Funding to fight tamarisk and other invasive vegetation is a challenge. Controlling tamarisk is the first step but revegetation, maintenance, and monitoring are also important to secure the future of riparian habitat.

Discussion of Target Shooting Issues on Public Lands Managed by BLM

UFO's Teresa Pfifer addressed target shooting on public lands. It is a growing concern when considering the increases seen in other uses on the about one million acres managed by the UFO. The UFO is currently considering future management of two target shooting sites proposed by Delta County. The old Paonia Rod & Gun Club, which ceased operations in the 1990s because of liability issues, is one site. It is open to the public, and the area is heavily used and frequently subject to illegal dumping. The second site under consideration is near Eckert. Shooting ranges are a valid use of public lands; however concerns with contamination, public safety, and dispersed versus concentrated use are just some of the issues to be addressed in the upcoming UFO RMP revision. The UFO recently conducted an environmental assessment (EA) to address a request to teach shooting on public lands. The EA received three protests from concerned residents near the site.

Public Comment Period

Matthew McCombs, from Senator Salazar's office, announced that he is leaving to take a job out-of-state and thanked the RAC for their support. Trudy Kareus, also with Senator Salazar, briefed the RAC on the proposed Dominguez-Escalante NCA and Wilderness. Senator Salazar asked sometime ago how he could assist the communities in preserving this area, which resulted in several public meetings. Given community consensus and the county commissioners' recent verbal agreement to move forward, the Colorado Congressional delegation will be working together to fulfill the communities' wishes.

Estella Holmes asked why there is a need to use public lands managed by the BLM for shooting when there are private clubs available. A number of RAC members explained that the majority of people mean well in using their public lands, and the few that don't must be educated through peer and agency outreach.

Lorie Molitor with the Western Slope Environmental Resource Council (WSERC) indicated that the county can be called to pick up illegally dumped trash. She also said that directional drilling creates several holes close together, and flow back from drilling muds is a major public concern. Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Committee inspectors also find vent stacks stuck open, which impacts air quality. Some industry workers are more informed on Best Management Practices than some agency employees.

Update on Healthy Lands Initiative (HLI)

There were no changes from the last report (see September 2007 meeting minutes). Al Heaton expressed concerns with the amount of cheatgrass on public lands in the Four Corners area and how it plays a part in changing the ecosystem and causing wildfires.

Schedule 2008 Meetings

Dolores Field Office, February 8, with RMP-related field trip

Montrose, May 30, with float trip

Ridgway, August 8

Gunnison, Nov. 14

Potential Topics for 2008 meetings:

CANM draft RMP and Subgroup Report

Cumulative impacts from energy development to wildlife and habitat fragmentation

New controls for invasive species such as cheatgrass

Wildfire mitigation related to invasive species

Community fire plans

New development associated with historic mining claims

Introduction to Geocommunicator website

Wind energy

Alan Staehle presented an updated Resolution regarding antler shed collecting and protection of GuSG and their habitat.

The Southwest Resource Advisory Council feels it is timely to reiterate our support for appropriate seasonal land and access closures of critical Gunnison sage grouse lek areas. Restricting public access to lands designated for multiple uses is a matter that deserves serious review. In this case, that review has taken place at many levels and with different groups and preservation of the Gunnison sage grouse, a unique indigenous species, justifies temporary and seasonal closures to protect the grouse and other wildlife. The Southwest Resource Advisory Council recommends that the Bureau of Land Management continue to support appropriate temporary and seasonal closures.

Staehle motioned to support the GFO and their temporary road closures implemented for the purpose of protecting the GuSG by updating the previously passed resolution. Betsy Marston seconded, and the motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

The meeting adjourned at 3:06 p.m.